

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00
USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
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AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY
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AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY
CINCPAC PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PK
SUBJECT: TALKS RUN INTO DIFFICULTIES: NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUE

REF: ISLAMBAD 5963

1. NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PNA RAN INTO DIFFICULTIES DURING THE FOURTH PLENARY SESSION OF TALKS ON JUNE 9, BUT SPOKESMEN FROM BOTH SIDES MAINTAINED THAT THEY WERE STILL HOPEFUL OF REACHING AN AGREEMENT. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, THE TALKS WERE DEVOTED TO A DETAILED DISCUSSION OF THE REPORT OF THE PIRZADA-GHAFOOR SUBCOMMITTEE (REFTEL) WHICH HAD MET THE DAY BEFORE. AGREEMENT WAS REPORTEDLY REACHED ON MOST POINTS AND THE REMAIN-
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ING DIFFERENCES WILL BE TAKEN UP AT THE NEXT SCHEDULED SESSION OF TALKS ON JUNE 10. THE JOINT STATEMENT ISSUED AT THE END OF THE TALKS SAID NAWABZADA NASRULLAH KHAN'S ABSENCE TO ATTEND HIS BROTHER'S FUNERAL WAS A FACTOR HOLDING UP THE NEGOTIATIONS. (NASRULLAH IS EXPECTED TO REJOIN THE TALKS ON JUNE 10).

2. ALTHOUGH SPOKESMEN FOR BOTH SIDES REFUSED TO IDENTIFY THEIR

DIFFERENCES, THE COLUMNIST H.K. BURKI COMMENTED, NO DOUBT AUTHORITATIVELY, IN THE PAKISTAN TIMES ON JUNE 10 THAT THEY INVOLVE THE RELEASE OF PRISONERS AND THE FORMATION OF AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT. ACCORDING TO BURKI, THE OPPOSITION'S DEMAND FOR THE FORMATION OF AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT DURING THE PERIOD BETWEEN THE DISSOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND ELECTIONS IS NOT ONLY UNCONSTITUTIONAL BUT WOULD RESULT, IN EFFECT, IN NO GOVERNMENT AT ALL. THE RELEASE OF ALL PRISONERS, HE ASSERTED, WOULD BE HIGHLY DANGEROUS. IF PERSONS GUILTY OF CRIMINAL OFFENSES ARE NOT PUNISHED ACCORDING TO LAW, THEN THE NEXT ELECTION CAMPAIGN MIGHT LEAD TO A RENEWED OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE.

3. OPPOSITION REACTION TO THE SNAG IN NEGOTIATIONS HAS BEEN OBJECTIVE AND, FOR THE MOST PART, CONCILIATORY DESPITE SOME THREATS TO BREAK OFF THE TALKS AND RENEW THE AGITATION. PROFESSOR GHAFOR APPEALED TO THE PRESS AFTER THE JUNE 9 SESSION TO REFRAIN FROM SPECULATION AND VOLUNTEERED THAT HE WAS SURE NEITHER SIDE WAS DELIBERATELY OBSTRUCTING THE NEGOTIATIONS. MUFTI MAHMUD, ADDRESSING THE PRESS THE SAME DAY, SAID TOMORROW'S (JUNE 10) SESSION MAY NOT BE DECISIVE, BUT URGED PEOPLE TO PRAY THAT THE TALKS END SUCCESSFULLY. HOWEVER, HE WARNED THAT THE PNA WOULD PULL OUT OF THE NEGOTIATIONS IF DIFFERENCES PERSIST. MIAN TUFAIL MOHAMMED, LEADER OF THE JAMAT-I-ISLAMI RELIGIOUS PARTY, SPOKE IN SIMILAR TERMS WHILE ADDRESSING OPPOSITION SUPPORTERS IN RAWALPINDI ON JUNE 9. IF THE TALKS FAIL, HE CLAIMED, THEN EVERY SECTION OF SOCIETY WILL COME OUT IN THE STREETS AGAIN. ASGHAR KHAN, MEETING INFORMALLY WITH THE PRESS IN ISLAMABAD ON JUNE 9 AFTER RETURNING FROM PESHAWAR, SAID THE PNA WOULD NOT COMPROMISE ON PRINCIPLES OR BETRAY THE PEOPLE. HOWEVER, HE EXPRESSED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HOPE A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT COULD STILL BE FOUND. ACCORDING TO A REPORT FROM CONGEN KARACHI, THREE PEACEFUL STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS WERE HELD THERE ON JUNE 9 TO SUPPORT THE PNA. IN AN IRONIC TWIST, PLACARDS CARRIED BY ONE OF THE GROUPS READ "DOWN WITH BHUTTO'S TIES TO IMPERIAL U.S."

4. AS A FOOT NOTE TO THE LATEST ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS, FORMER PUNJAB GOVERNOR AND SUCCESSIVELY BHUTTO'S HEIR APPARENT AND POLITICAL ANTAGONIST, GHULAM MUSTAFA KHAR ANNOUNCED ON JUNE 9 IN LAHORE THAT HE WILL SUPPORT THE PPP TO HELP BHUTTO FIGHT AGAINST THE "FORCES OF DISRUPTION AND DISINTEGRATION." KHAR STOPPED SHORT, HOWEVER, OF ACCUSING THE US OF INTERFERENCE IN PAKISTAN'S DOMESTIC AFFAIRS.

5. THE NEGOTIATIONS HAVE ENTERED THE STAGE WHERE HARD BARGAINING WILL BE REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE A COMPROMISE. UNLESS THERE IS A SUDDEN, AND UNEXPECTED, BREAKTHROUGH ON JUNE 10, SEVERAL MORE DAYS WILL PROBABLY BE REQUIRED TO WORK OUT A SETTLEMENT IF POSSIBLE. BHUTTO HAS APPARENTLY AGREED TO HOLD NEW ELECTIONS, BUT THE

OPPOSITION REMAINS UNCERTAIN WHETHER HE WILL ALLOW THEM TO BE FREE AND FAIR, HENCE THE DIFFICULTY INVOLVED IN DECIDING HOW TO SHARE POWER IF AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT IS ESTABLISHED. ALLOCATION OF PORTFOLIOS WILL BE CRUCIAL IN DETERMINING WHO CONTROLS THE ELECTORAL MACHINERY. THE PNA ALSO WANTS TO BE CONSULTED ABOUT THE APPOINTMENT OF GOVERNORS AND OTHER KEY OFFICIALS. SO FAR, BHUTTO APPEARS TO BE RESISTING THESE DEMANDS.

6. THE QUESTION OF RELEASING PRISONERS PRESENTS FURTHER PROBLEMS. THE PNA IS ANXIOUS TO GET ITS WORKERS OUT OF JAIL BEFORE FRESH ELECTIONS ARE HELD, ESPECIALLY HANIF RAMAY AND CHAUDHRY ZAHUR ELAHI WHO COMMAND IMPORTANT POLITICAL FOLLOWINGS IN PUNJAB. THERE IS ALSO THE RESIDUAL PROBLEM OF THE FUTURE OF THE IMMINENT WALI KHAN AND HIS ASSOCIATES. BHUTTO IS NOT LIKELY TO BE ACCOMMODATING, FURTHER COMPLICATING THE TALKS. WHILE IT IS TOO EARLY TO PREDICT THE OUTCOME OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, IMPORTANT CONCESSIONS WILL HAVE TO BE MADE BY BOTH SIDES TO SALVAGE AN AGREEMENT.
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